



Vulgarisation

Lenin at this stage of his writing life (1917) is using the word “Opportunist” to describe the Social Democrats, reformists or gradualists who had nearly all voted to take part in the Imperialist world war. He used the term “Anarchist” to refer to the ultra-leftist pseudo-revolutionaries, but also noted that the Opportunists and the Anarchists were petty-bourgeois “twin brothers”.

Lenin is also writing of “the most prominent theoreticians of Marxism”. Kautsky, a German, had been known as the “Pope

of Marxism”, whereas Plekhanov was known as the “Father of Russian Marxism.” Both were by 1917 proven “renegades” – i.e. people who had “reneged”, or gone back on their word. They were supporting their respective national bourgeoisies in the inter-Imperialist Great War (First World War). The most characteristic is:

The Renegade Kautsky

Kautsky... displays the same old "superstitious reverence" for the state, and "superstitious belief" in bureaucracy...

These statements are perfectly clear. This pamphlet of Kautsky's should serve as a measure of comparison of what the German Social-Democrats promised to be before the imperialist war and the depth of degradation to which they, including Kautsky himself, sank when the war broke out. "The present situation," Kautsky wrote in the pamphlet under survey, "is fraught with the danger that we [i.e., the German Social-Democrats] may easily appear to be more 'moderate' than we really are." It turned out that in reality the German Social-Democratic Party was much more moderate and opportunist than it appeared to be!

Kautsky, the German Social-Democrats' spokesman, seems to have declared: I abide by revolutionary views (1899), I recognize, above all, the inevitability of the social revolution of the proletariat (1902), I recognize the advent of a new era of revolutions (1909). Still, I am going back

on what Marx said as early as 1852, since the question of the tasks of the proletarian revolution in relation to the state is being raised (1912).

Summing up, Lenin responds:

*We, however, shall break with these traitors to socialism, and **we shall fight for the complete destruction of the old state machine**, in order that the armed proletariat itself may become the government. These are two vastly different things.*

We, however, shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight - not to "shift the balance of forces", but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

The experience of the Commune has been not only ignored but distorted. Far from inculcating in the workers' minds the idea that the time is nearing when they must act to smash the old state machine, replace it by a new one, and in this way make their political rule the foundation for the socialist reorganization of society, they have actually preached to the masses the very opposite and have depicted the "conquest of power" in a way that has left thousands of loopholes for opportunism.

So Lenin knew well the arguments about “shifts”, which we in South Africa have heard all over again, and he knew about opportunism, which we have also experienced. Lenin knew that the armed proletariat itself must become the government. Read the entire chapter in the attached file, or download it, below.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The State and Revolution, Chapter 6, Vulgarisation of Marxism by Opportunists, Lenin.](#)
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